

ABSTRACTS

Cohn, Norman, Europe's Inner Demons. NY: Basic Books, 1975. Ch.5,
"The Crushing of the Knights Templar."

The founding of the order during the first crusade in order to give military protection to the crusaders quickly led to their recognition by the Pope. They became established as a powerful force throughout Europe and the Middle East. Their success in military and administrative matters won them wide recognition and support. They became involved in banking, property, trade, and matters of state, especially in France. Their success in worldly affairs made them arrogant and created resentment. The end of the crusades deprived the order of a *raison d'être* and at the beginning of the 14th century Philip the Fair of France found it convenient to solve his financial problems by destroying the order and seizing its property. They were charged with heresy, subjected to the inquisition, tortured, and found guilty. The charge of heresy not only placed them outside of humanity, but also led automatically to the confiscation of their property. Since this was also a period of conflict between church and state, Philip eventually succeeded in forcing a weak Pope to abolish the order. Its members were either burned at the stake or imprisoned. This destruction was only a single chapter in a much larger series of events: the decrease in religious certainty, the real or perceived threats to religious orthodoxy, the suspected increase in the power of the devil, and the persecution of those individuals and groups who were suspected of deviating from the increasingly narrow orthodoxy of the Church of Rome.

Saunders, J.J., The History of the Mongol Conquests. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, n.d., Preface and Ch.4 "Chingis Khan"

The Preface presents a critical examination of the available literature on the history of the Mongol Empire. It discusses the availability of sources and the linguistic difficulties in dealing with them, and discusses the biases associated with the time and place in which the available histories were produced.

Ch.4 summarises the physical environment of Mongolia, the mythological origin and early history of the steppes tribes, and the origin and youth of Temujin - the son of an obscure tribal chief who managed to unite the Mongol tribes. After his recognition as the leader of all the Mongols and renaming as Chingis Khan, he embarked on a divinely inspired mission to conquer most of the known world, from China to Eastern Europe. Saunders concludes the chapter by re-evaluating Chingis Khan's reign which had been known mainly for his irrational cruelty in exterminating enemies. He emphasizes his cool and rational approach to empire building and evaluates his achievements as a soldier, administrator, statesman, and law giver who laid the foundations for the greatest empire that the world had seen up to that time.

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Surprise!! The last Newsletter was not the last one before the end of term. But this one definitely is.

Enjoy your holidays and
Good Luck!